

July 24 Babe Ruth SNJ 15s

Powell makes his state tournament debut in fine fashion

By Rich Fisher

Fish4Scores.com

July 24: Despite having its ticket already punched to the next round, Steven Powell says the Hamilton Babe Ruth 15-year-old All Stars figure if they are playing in the state tournament, they might as well try and win it.

“We really want to get this tournament,” said Powell after pitching Hamilton to a 10-2 win over Mount Laurel in today’s Babe Ruth SNJ State Tournament game at Veterans Park. “Since we’re playing in it, we really want to win it and it’s going to prepare us for the next one.”

The “next one” is the Mid-Atlantic Regionals, which Hamilton has an automatic bye into by virtue of hosting.

But the Switlik Gang is playing like it wants to prove it belongs, having won two straight as it gets set to play the Ewing-Manasquan winner at 6 p.m. Wednesday in the winner’s bracket final.

Powell, making his first state tournament start, had just one bad inning and was in complete control using basically a curveball and two-seam fastball. He allowed five hits and three walks while striking out five.

It was a strong effort on a hot day by the Hamilton High West JV hurler.

“I just took deep breaths and kept myself pumped,” said Powell, who helped his cause with two RBI singles. “I just tried to stay cool in the dugout.”

Hamilton gave its hurler all he needed with a three-run second inning. Luke Westerberg led off the frame with a home run. Kevin Smiegocki singled, Tim Paragone walked and after a fly out, Powell and Garrett Bezak followed with RBI singles.

Powell continued to throw goose eggs until the fifth, when Mount Laurel scored twice to make it interesting.

“They just hit my balls and got them in the right spots,” Powell said. “From there I got pumped up. We scored some runs and I got back at it. I just didn’t throw my change-up anymore.”

The Switlik Gang responded to Mount Laurel’s runs the best way possible by putting six on the board in the top of the sixth. Smiegocki and Nick LaBelle walked and Powell’s single scored Smiegocki while LaBelle tallied on a throwing error.

Dan Garcia reached on an infield hit and Gerry Gomez followed with a two-run single. Westerberg then hit a hard smash to third that resulted in an error that scored two more runs.

Hamilton’s final run came in the seventh when Tyler Barlow doubled, Ray Mazzella singled and Garcia grounded out to plate Barlow.

Powell finished strong in the bottom of the seventh, and Hamilton prepared for a few days off before returning to the quest at hand – winning a championship even if it doesn’t have to.